



## Small scale producers of swine suppressed by legislation that increasingly benefits large farms. The end of the traditional Romanian Christmas pig

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**Introduction.** Romanians have an old tradition of what the Christmas pig means. After a Christian fast, full of "culinary and spiritual sacrifices", the pig is sacrificed at Christmas. This Christmas pig comes as a permission to eat different foods and as a holiday treat. At Christmas, Christians gather, rejoice together and eat freely. The symbolism of the Christmas pig is not limited to the culinary value, it has a connotation of history, national tradition and gratitude for the generosity of the divinity, as the fish was once the symbol of Christianity in the early Christians (Guirguis et al 2020).

Leaving aside the symbolism and traditions, the pig must be considered as the favorite animal of Romanians, both for subsistence animal husbandry and for high-capacity animal husbandry. A country that should be eminently agricultural, such as Romania, has cheap food resources for raising pigs. Dozens of pigs can live next to a sheepfold with whey residues, next to an entrepreneur who produces other types of food, or next to the human household at the country side, increasing the degree of efficiency and capitalization of resources. Therefore, for many years in a row in the period after the 1989 Revolution, Romania was a major producer and even exporter of pork.

This was followed by a series of regulations at national level, initially suggested and legislated at EU level, which led to the unprofitability of many agricultural sectors in Romania, including pig farming. The unprofitability affected the entire animal husbandry, but especially hit the small producers, who were largely forced to abandon small businesses and move to the city. Farmers abandoned the land for which their ancestors gave their lives to preserve it. Employed in the city, with jobs as a waiter or maid, gradually, these small producers, who always consumed vegetables, fruits, eggs, milk, cheese and meat produced by their hands, have today become consumers who buy their food in the hypermarket (often from import). The quality of some of these products is questionable in the context of pollution and superintensive exploitation. It is sad and at the same time funny that the European Union and the Sanitary Veterinary Authority for Food Safety (in Romania) are very concerned about biosecurity and consumer health. They are so concerned about food safety that today the Romanian farmer has become a consumer of imported food, raised in super-intensive systems, but which "respects the biosecurity rules".

This paper aims to list and explain the main articles of law and regulations that have bankrupted family businesses and small pig producers in Romania.

**African swine fever.** In the countries (member or candidate) of the European Union, between 01.01.2018 - 23.09.2018, 1213 outbreaks of African swine fever (see details in Arzumanyan et al 2019; Ungur & Tăbăran 2020) were confirmed in domestic pigs (of

which 1 in Bulgaria, 10 in Italy, 10 in Latvia, 49 in Lithuania, 109 in Poland, 949 in Romania and 85 in Ukraine) and 4113 outbreaks of African swine fever in wild boars (*Sus scrofa ferus*) (of which 5 in Belgium, 28 in the Czech Republic, 198 in Estonia, 34 in Hungary, 40 in Italy, 549 in Latvia, 1233 in Lithuania, 1941 in Poland, 49 in Romania and 36 in Ukraine) (European Commission 2018 a, b). According to an ANSVSA press release from 11/01/2018 in Romania, African swine fever was evolving in 17 counties (Sălaj, Bihor, Satu-Mare, Călărași, Brăila, Constanța, Ialomița, Galați, Ilfov, Tulcea, Buzău, Giurgiu, Dâmbovița, Teleorman, Maramureș Vrancea, Dolj), in 276 localities, with a number of 1,062 outbreaks (of which 15 in commercial holdings). Also, 142 cases were registered in wild boars. A total of 356,144 pigs affected by the disease were eliminated (ANSVSA 2018).

Judging by the principles imposed by European Union rules, Romania, the owner of a biosphere reserve such as the Danube Delta (plenty of wild boar) and virgin forests (with lot of wild boars), in order to export pork or to produce pork for domestic consumption would have to resort to wild boar eradication. From the point of view of the states in central Europe, which no longer have forests and have eradicated even their wolf (*Canis lupus*) in order to make the most of the pastures without damage, it is very simple to argue the bans imposed on Romania. It is obvious that Romania has only two alternatives: the eradication of the wild boar (obviously, it would be a crime) or the complete closure of the pig production sector, a fact that delights some European Union countries. The money compensation given to those affected by swine fever is nothing but a hoax, because the restoration of livestock and the resumption of production means a lot of time, lost contracts as suppliers and very large investments, which no farmer assumes every year to take from end. However, some farmers have had the strength to continue raising pigs and take this risk.

**Prohibition of breeding and sale of pigs.** If the farmers managed to withstand these epidemiological attempts, regulations of a national nature emerged, which brought the farmers to a standstill. A number of minimum biosecurity conditions in pig holdings have been published by ANSVSA order (2020) and other amendments, which are more prohibitions than recommended minimum conditions. We quote some articles from the ANSVSA Order (2020):

"Art. 3. Raising pigs on open-air holdings is prohibited.

(2) The rearing of pigs in sheepfolds, summer camps, forest cantons, cantons near dams, vegetable agricultural societies is prohibited". Therefore, for example, a mill that produces a lot of grain waste, or sheep farmers that produce whey, cannot capitalize on these production wastes that could keep them profitable.

"Art. 4. In non-professional holdings (subsistence holding, registered in the National System for Identification and Registration of Animals (SNIIA), owned by individuals not registered at the trade register office, where pigs are raised only for fattening and slaughter for family consumption) it is forbidden:

i) reproduction activity;

ii) the movement of live pigs regardless of destination" (ANSVSA 2020).

This means that the pig farmer as a subsistence farmer should absurdly incinerate his surplus animals as giving in the form of a gift, exchange, or sale is prohibited.

The worst thing is that reproduction is forbidden, farmers being forced to buy pig youth at an extra price. As large pig producers compete with small producers, this condition makes small producers unprofitable from the start.

**Prohibition of feeding pigs with food scraps.** Next, we will resume the ANSVSA Order (2020), which reads as follows:

"Art. 5. - Non-professional holdings are required to comply with the following minimum rules for level I biosecurity:...

6. the operator has the obligation to comply with the ban on feeding pigs with food scraps containing animal by-products".

Under these conditions, all food scraps from the household (vernacularly called "lături" – in Romanian), which have been used since ancient times in raising pigs and

give pork special organoleptic properties, must be discarded. Where is the ecological and economic spirit of these measures and what is their scientific basis?

“Art. 6. In commercial farms, authorized/registered for raising other animal species, it is forbidden to raise pigs” ANSVSA (2020). This Article 6, together with Article 5, discreetly suggests that you are not allowed to raise pigs for the purpose of capitalizing on household waste. They must be discarded and the feed must be purchased from major feed producers (corporations), which meet the standards and hold certifications.

It doesn't even matter that the taste of the meat will not be the same, the important thing is that the farmer learned where to buy both the piglet and the piglet's feed.

Closing the sarcastic paragraph, farmers are lucky that the pig, an omnivorous animal, can be raised with grain. These cereals will not be banned under any pretext by politicians for a long time to come.

**Conclusions.** Times are becoming more and more difficult for the pig farmer in Romania. The conditions defined in the orders and regulations published by the authorities are defined as minimum, but only large companies meet these conditions. This outlines a monopoly of large corporations and an abandonment of village life by the Romanian peasant. The native village is a place where people no longer find their former purpose and freedom. It is a matter of time before the breeding and slaughter of pigs in Romania will be as common as it is now near the homes of citizens in the United States, i.e. absent. Only the specialist in ethics and biosafety will be able to slaughter the pig according to rules that are too difficult to understand and difficult to respect.

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